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Among the
Apple Orchards

unpublished

❧ CLEMENT SCOTT ❧

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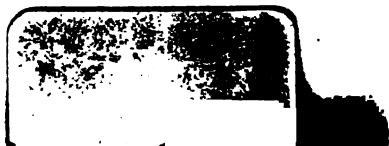
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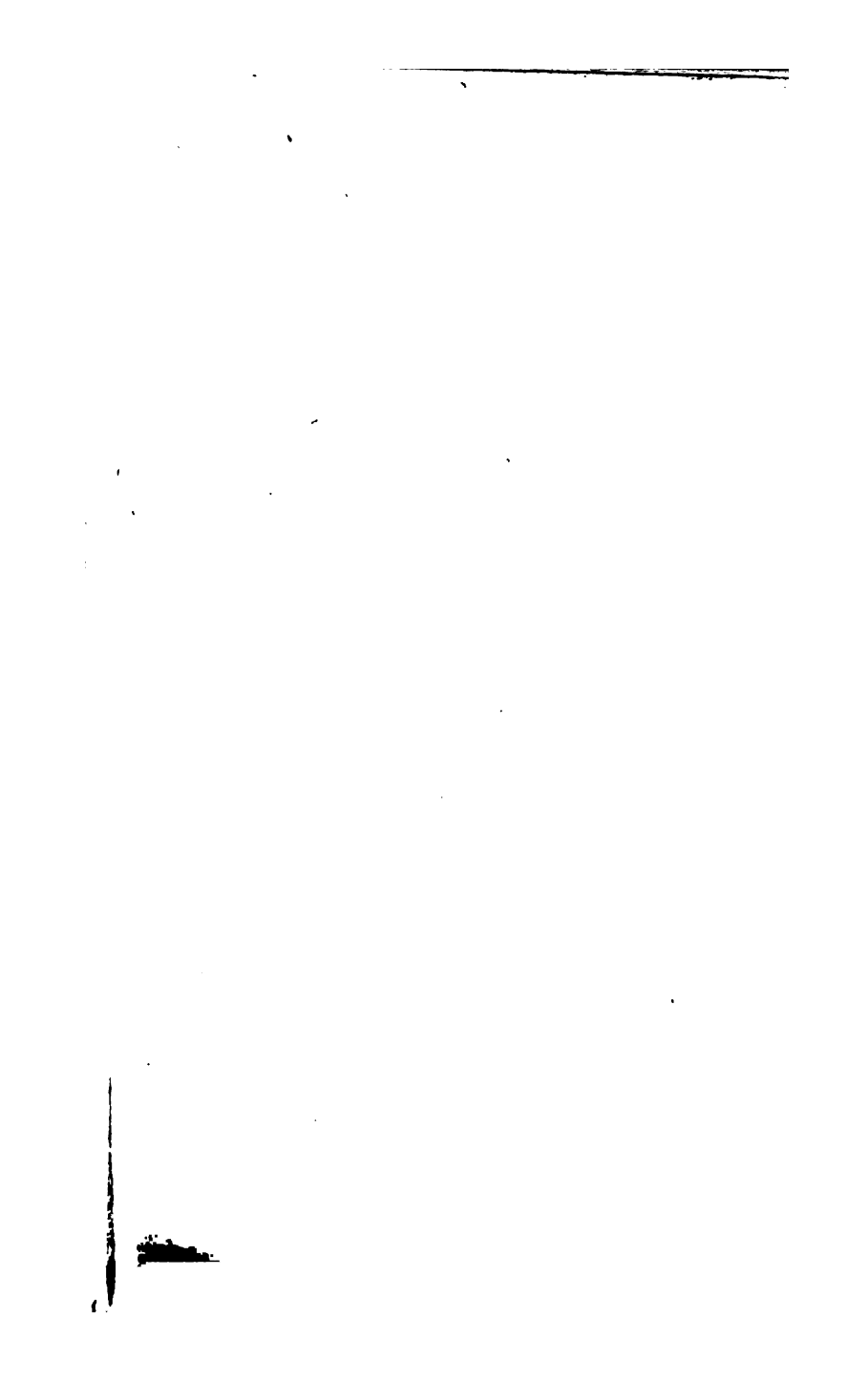
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**THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
(CLASS OF 1882)
OF NEW YORK**

1918







To my
Dear and Devoted Friend
Elizabeth Manning
From
Clara Lusk

May 1895.

Among the Apple Orchards



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AMONG THE APPLE ORCHARDS

BY
CLEMENT SCOTT
=

SECOND EDITION

REMINGTON AND COMPANY, LIMITED

15, KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN
AND SYDNEY

1895

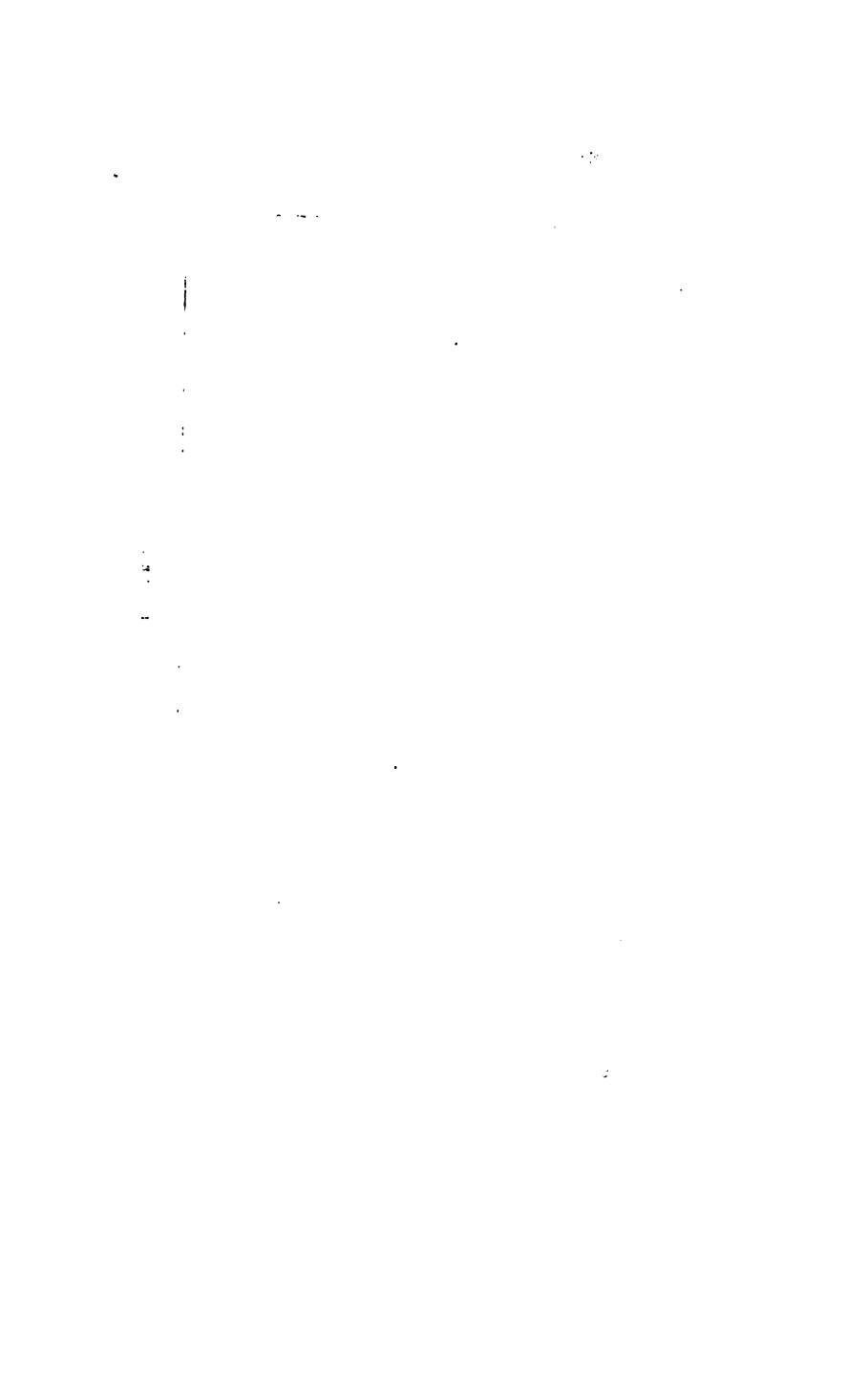
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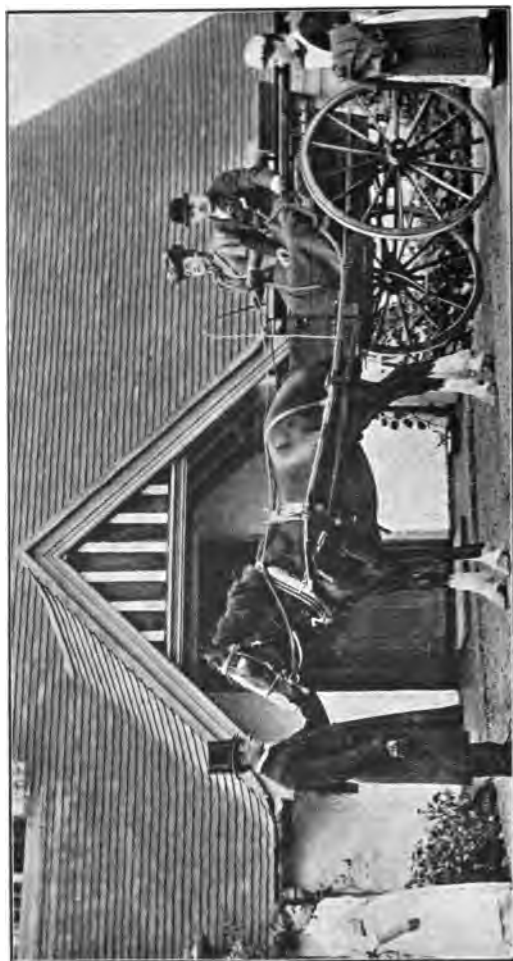
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AWAY WE GO TO TEWKESBURY.

AD MARGARITAM.

• • • •

Under the Apple Trees! The Apple Trees!
Love was our sole companion yester-year;
Save for the sigh of uncomplaining breeze,
And kiss made out of rain—lone nature's tear!
Under the Apple Trees!

• • •

Oh! when loved leaves have fallen to the
ground,
And I have mastered what we never knew;
Upon your lips let one more kiss be found,
To fall upon my face embraced by Yew—
The Guardian Yew!

C. S.

IN MEMORIAM, BANNUT TREE FARM,
SUMMER, 1894.





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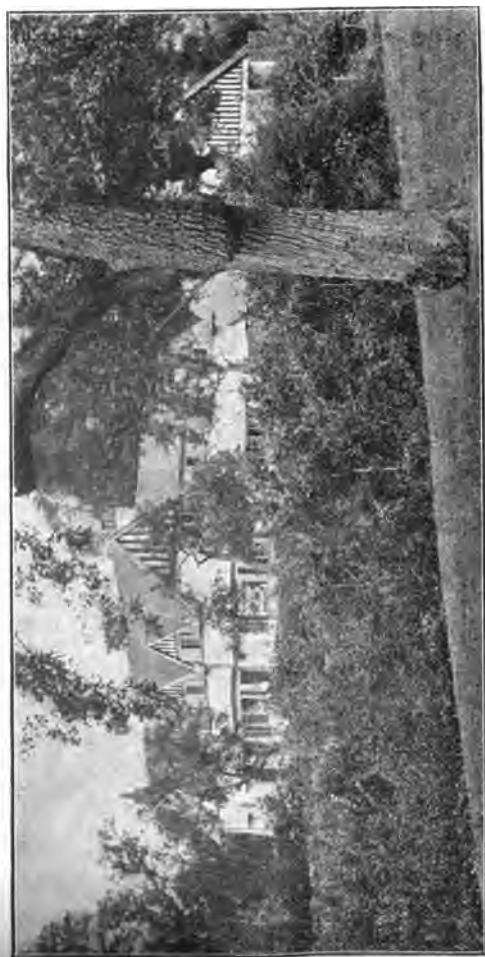
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WALNUT TREE FARM.

Where are the fields and their emerald cover,
The wayside flowers and travelling cart,
The new-found love and the long-tried lover ?
They are better by far than our feverish art.
There's triumph in fame, but freedom's better ;
So give us a taste of a wandering life.
The senses quicken as Fancy's hand
Paints endless love in Bohemia's land.





WHERE LOVE DWELT RESTFULLY.

WALNUT TREE FARM.

IT was a long, low, many-gabled, black and white, half-timbered, Elizabethan farm-house in the very heart of perhaps the most beautiful country in all England! Ten miles away to the right and to the left are two thriving and popular county towns, where the world, as I once knew it, is in full holiday swing. At Great Malvern the doctors are packing their

B



rheumatic patients in wet sheets, the char-à-bancs are touting for passengers to go round the hills, a wheezy quartette party has possessed itself of a cosy corner in a sheltered nest, under a wide-spreading tree, on the fashionable parade, and by means of throaty tenors, uncomic comedians, jangling banjos, and a consumptive piano, is doing its best to drive peace-loving Malvern stark staring mad.

Yes, that way madness comes at last. A nervous patient, who has gone through a weekly course of "The Village Blacksmith," "Good-bye, Sweetheart, Good-bye," "Not so Bad for Me," and the Chevalier ballads, all sung three times a day, and played to the wrong time,



with a Sunday dose of the Salvation Army, is in a fair way to become a candidate for the splendid lunatic asylum on the Worcester Road. At Tewkesbury, in the famous land of old-world battle-fields, they are jubilant in their preparation for a regatta and the mad revels of a long-expected Bank Holiday. But I heed not the discord on the right, or the note of hilarious preparation on the left ; for I have suddenly come into possession of Walnut Tree Farm.


It is five o'clock on a glorious summer morning, and I discover that I am leaning out of a dormer window in one of the gables of the many-gabled farm. I draw aside the scarlet curtains of the latticed

4 *WALNUT TREE FARM*

windows, and, kneeling on an old oak chair, gaze upon the exquisite landscape, and revel in the joyous freshness of the approaching day. A blue soft mist is lifting like a curtain, and discovering to me the undulating ridge of the Malvern Hills. Below me is a deep dip of meadow decked in the freshest of green after these growing rains. A solitary figure, ankle deep in dew, is creeping along the upland and the lowland, gathering mushrooms for our morning meal. The birds in every tree and hedge are singing in chorus the first stanzas of the hymn to Nature and the morning light. Poultry of innumerable classes, rare and costly breeds, dear to their owners, escape from the confines where




they have roosted since sunset, and go off in detachments across the sun-kissed fields. There are sounds of awaking in the farm-yard. Chains rattle against the iron mangers in the stables, and though all is still as death in front of me, at the rear of this peaceful home I am aware of the birth of another working day. A low whistle from the stable-yard, the monotonous beat of pumping water from the wells, the swish of the grooms at work with their horses, the cheery good-morning of the farm hands going to their accustomed work, reminds me that the sweet night is over and the light is not far distant. How gradual is the lifting of the curtain of the summer day! How exquisitely




modulated are the crescendo effects of Nature ! After all the toil, the turmoil, and the eternal restlessness of London life, here I could kneel for hours at the old farm window, thanking God for His gift of perfect peace. But it cannot be ; I must be up and doing, like the rest. There is no time just now to dress thoroughly ; I cannot afford to miss a moment of this enchanting pleasure, so I hurry into flannels, and, with a pipe in my mouth, change the scene from an interior to an exterior. I cannot resist the pleasure of a peep into the still deserted rooms of my ideal farm.

First, " my lady's parlour." What an exquisite taste she has !




It is a room all nooks and cosy corners. The walls are adorned with a Morris designed paper. Over the quaint fireplace hang bits of old brass—brass ladles, brass spoons, brass snuffers and snuffer-trays—collections from many an old Worcestershire cottage. Marqueterie work and Chippendale divide the supremacy in decoration with an odd, modern lazy chair and sofa that belong to a less formal and more luxurious age. The morning sun is already streaming into my "Lady's Chamber," the room is scented like a rose, and the rose scent of the room goes out to meet the rose scent of the terrace garden. I meet no one in the passages, so full of interest, with their old

grandfather clocks, old oak chests, old china, old chairs, and old hunting prints. And now I am in the principal living room of the farm of the Walnut Tree. What is it like? A bit of an old—well, half like a bit of an old low-roofed chamber in Ightham Moat, in Kent, and half like the best bits in an old-fashioned inn parlour. Every door in the house opens with a cottage latch, and the living room leads into the garden through a rose-covered porch, guarded by a latched door, divided in the centre, stable fashion. But it is the extreme end of the room that delights me. The fireplace has a settle and a chimney corner; it has an ancient spit, and it is so screened round and cosy that I long to



send up to London for the "Boys" to enjoy a tobacco parliament at this hospitable fireside when evening comes again. And then, the study! The old oak desk is in a complete bay of latticed windows, with a low, cushioned seat round all the bay. I fancy I could write my long-promised novel in this restful room, looking out upon the down dip of the walnut trees and homely kitchen garden ground, where the greedy birds and insects are stealing the apricots and making war on the pears and apples. Here, where the smell of thyme, and mint, and stock, and gilliflower steals through the open windows, I could start my volume of recollections of a busy life, its pleasures and incessant toil. I

seem to have lived in this room, and to have worked at its garden window all my life. The strange, odd feeling comes across me that the place is not new to me in the least ; that it is all familiar to me, and that I once was a dweller here in the days of dreamland. I look round the lattice-windowed study, and wonder what it all means. Surely it is not mine, and I am not master here. No warnings for London theatres or entertainments greet my eyes ; I cannot see the ghost of a theatrical book or playbill ; no pictures of actors or actresses adorn this rural sanctum. Cards announcing the meet of the Ledbury Hounds last season, lists of country cricket matches, pads and brushes of



slaughtered foxes, tickets of poultry prizes at rural shows, books on farming or tilling, on poultry rearing, on every imaginable hobby and pastime of the country gentleman, remind me that I am an interloper, and have no right to search for inspiration at this quaint old desk.

And now for the exterior, as I wander on the garden terrace whilst the sun is mounting higher and higher in the heavens. The house of the many gables is on a gentle eminence in a dip of the hills. Save for one half-timbered, black and white cottage at the edge of the farmyard, there is not a vestige of a house to be seen on mountain, hill, or valley. I cannot see a cornfield, or a poppy;

there is not a sign of a plough, not a peep of a road or pathway, not an idea of a village, not a sound of business or life anywhere ; nothing but green hills, green hedge-rows, and an all-covering carpet of emerald meadows. I have a dozen plans in my head for the day, but no fixed determination to select any. There are those hills to be climbed. I want to mount up there to the sky-line and look over on the other side. Some day I must look over, if I dare ! At present the imagination must suffice, the mystery of it all must be a solace. I must not rush at my pleasures with such haste and greed ; so I light another pipe and sit in the old porch, gazing and


gazing, and wondering and wondering. There is a village flower fête on the other side of the hill. Have I the heart to leave the old farm garden and mix with the world again? If I listen very intently I can hear the rumble of the country carts, and on the other side of the hedge the chatting of the village children, delighted with their unaccustomed holiday. I have seen so many village flower fêtes that I can picture it all—the long, stuffy tent, the apples, and pears, and plums, and apricots, and peaches, and bloom-covered grapes, all temptingly arranged on plates—delicious fruit that I may not eat; the beans, and peas, and tomatoes, and potatoes, piled up in profusion—vegetables that

I may not buy. And then the amusements of the village "feet," as they insist on calling it, the local band, the bran pie, the homely perfume of the damp cottager, the foot races, and kiss-in-the-ring, the county folk who condescend and the villagers who bow and curtsy, the dreadfully official master of the ceremonies, the sempiternally simpering curate, and the all-important vicar. No ; I think it better to postpone the village fête and to take one more turn in the old garden. I wonder if, stranger as I am, I can make friends with the inhabitants of this lovely farm. I go back into the old parlour and cut off a hunch of bread from a cottage loaf. I make the accustomed "coobiddy,

coobiddy," and to my delight, layman as I am, hundreds of fowl—black, white, and grey—rush at me from every corner of the meadow-land. They come "as single spies and in battalions," for this is a poultry farm. Long-legged and short-legged, plumed and tufted, combed and uncombed, on they come at my unaccustomed call. There is nothing like change of diet even to the feathered tribe on a poultry farm. Accustomed to daily rations of wheat, they pick combatively at biscuit, they struggle for the mastery over a tartine of bread and butter, and when amongst the largesse of breakfast goods comes a secreted portion of sweet cake, the leeriest of the brood makes one sharp dig

at the prize, and bears it away to the solitude of a sheltering gooseberry bush. If I have succeeded so well with the cocks, hens, and pullets, why not with the other inhabitants of the farm, with whom I am anxious to ingratiate myself? I will go into the orchard for my bribe.

Windfalls there are none, so I must revert to the practice of my youth and shake the tree, for yonder in the meadow is the gentle, little fat pony, with whose assistance I am to visit the neighbouring market towns, not unknown to English history, as well as the battle-fields of the Stuarts and Roundheads. The pony and the cob are bound to me for life with the aid of an apple, and



the mild-eyed cow rubs her wet nose against my hand, thankful for a wisp of hay stolen from the stable manger. But here let me pause and say that there is something inexpressibly caressing about the whole of the animal life at the old farm of the Walnut Tree. No bird or beast runs away from you. The fowls cluck under the very eaves of the farmhouse, and the more daring of them venture on to the red bricks of the portico for a fallen crumb; cattle and horses are not scared by a stranger, but come to be petted and caressed; the dogs, unchained and untortured, never utter an angry growl, but sniff, recognise, and make friends at once; the cats and kittens bound

up the gnarled bark of the fruit trees, and delight to live and play; parrots and pet birds, old, grave-faced macaws and their smaller companions of the tropics, in liveries of grey and green, sun themselves on the farm-yard palings, careless of the generous dog and fearless of the "harmless, necessary cat." The secret of this happy family is soon explained to me, though I guessed it before I asked. "My lady" is an active member of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and woe be to the yeoman or the tramp who is found overriding, over-loading, or otherwise maltreating beasts of burden within the district that her energy commands. At any rate, she

practises what she preaches, and has made the farm of the Walnut Tree a paradise for animals of every kind. Here man and beast are, as they should be, the best friends in the world. But the day is wearing on, and as yet I have not definitely made up my mind what to do. Suddenly, as often happens in hilly or mountainous districts, the sun has gone out. A cold, ominous chill is felt in the once sunny garden. The flowers tremble and close up at the advent of a storm. A grey darkness covers the surrounding hills ; and, somehow, I do not want any more to look over and see what it is like on the other side. It must be sorrow over there, and not joy, for a

black curtain has fallen over the fissure of the hills and gusts of rain sweep along the troubled valley. All is gloom and desolation. My friends of the farm have scattered in every direction. Under the trees, under warm hay ricks, under sheltered hedgerows you might possibly find them. They are gone. So far as I can see I am alone with the storm. How is it that rain never seems to be so disagreeable in the country as in London? It is delightful to hear the old trees bend and bow to the tempest, to smell the rich earthy flavour of the pasture land, and to hear with what delight the thirsty soil sucks in the invigorating moisture. It is only the poor weak flowers that I pity. Oaks,

and elms, and walnuts rejoice in this grand fight with the storm power. They stretch out their giant arms and nerve themselves for the attack. They seem to hiss with joy on the advent of the storm-cloud, and under their sheltering arms they take the cowering and defenceless beasts, proof against every foe but the quick, forked flash of the lightning, that kills in a half second both the sheltered and the shelterer. The storm passes ; the hills become bright and blue again ; the thirst-slaked meadows are greener than before. The rain is still pouring off the gabled roof of the old farm : all the water-butts are full to overflowing. What is to be done now ? The roads and lanes

are almost impassable. The sky, with its patches of grey and blue, warns the traveller against any extended journey. The "day is far spent and the night is at hand," and I have not wandered far from the confines of the Walnut Tree Farm.

I don't mind confessing that I have a passion for old roadside inns. The cyclists and the tourists have taken possession of them all within some hundreds of miles of London. The restaurant and the flashy bar have gradually eaten out the romance of the old-world inn. But in my journey towards the discovery of this ideal farm, I came across, in these beautiful Midlands, an inn such as we read about in story books, and some-

times see produced on the stage, illustrating a form of drama happily, as yet, free and undivorced from poetry and sentiment. It was an inn with the sign of the Three Feathers. It stood fifty yards or so back from the road, on the slope of a hill. You know the kind of dear old roadside inn that I mean, with a wide-spreading tree and a circular bench in front of it, and a table and benches outside the hospitable door, ready for the passing wagoners; a village inn with red curtains over the latticed windows, for red curtains look so well at night when the candles and the lamps are lighted and the labourers are at their delightful gossip inside. And here I found also the red curtains over

the well-worn settle, the deep chimney corner, the sanded floor, and a landlady and landlord of the old school. Before I had been in the house five minutes, I was taken by the old dame over the kitchen and flower garden. I was introduced to the best parlour with its corner cupboard of old china, I was led triumphantly into the dairy and made at home at once.

What if between the storms I should stroll up to the Three Feathers to study character? I know of no other place where a novelist or dramatist can better acquaint himself with the peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of village life than in the smoking-parlour of an old roadside inn. Do you think Shakespeare was never there in

good old Warwickshire; and who shall say that Thomas Hardy and Arthur Wing Pinero never lighted their pipes and blew a cloud amongst the beer jugs and polished settles of an ancestral inn? Otherwise, how could they be so accurate with their peasant's lingo? Politics, local matters, religion and the law, gossip and chattermag, commonsense, bigotry, and ignorance, are all in full blow when a sudden storm or the leisure of Saturday night sends Hodge and his companions to the shelter and friendly society of a village inn.

There! I was just about to leave the old farm garden for the first time to-day when there comes over the silent hills a sunset that

no lover of nature would gladly miss. I shall not find it anywhere to perfection but here, where I stand alone in the fading light. Nature seems to have closed in upon me. The sense of distance has gone. I can almost touch the mountains now, they seem so near. You can almost feel the silence, it is so clinging and companionable. All my friends of the farm have gone to rest. The flowers one by one have folded up and dropped off to sleep. Only the yellow evening primrose that has drooped all day like a dead thing startles into life and gives the sad touch of colour to day's departing scene. There are red sunsets and purple sunsets; there are sunsets of orange and

scarlet ; but this is an evening primrose sunset—the sad and pale reflection of a golden day. There are sunsets that are angry, and assertive, and triumphant ; but this was a kindly, gentle, and affectionate sunset, that seemed to be the fitting finish to a day of perfect peace and rest. Again the wish came strong upon me to climb up the blue mountain yonder and look on the other side of the distant hills. How strong and penetrating the deep silence became ! For the first time to-day I seemed to be companionless. I had not longed or wanted for a friend until now. The great end was coming, and loneliness was at last intolerable. Alone, did I say? No. As I stood in the deep

silence, listening to the delicious harmony of rest, I felt a gentle hand upon my arm. It linked with mine. "Is it not lovely here?"

One by one the lamps were lighted in the old farm rooms. They gleamed through the crimson curtains that covered the latticed windows, contrasting, in their warmth and homeliness, with the cool calm outside. Autumn was scarcely here, but they had lighted a fire, and it flickered on the polished furniture and made deep shadows in the old chimney corner. I don't believe there is any day in the country when a fire is not a friend. There is no after-glow in England, as in the East ; at home

no fierce light—glowing, and burning, and splendidly assertive—incarnadines the horizon when the bell of night rings out. There it is a tocsin ; here it is a requiem. There it is a fire-bell ; here it is a chime. There the day of nature ends with a triumphant shout ; here with a whispered prayer. The fresh green of the meadows is blotted out, the flowers are colourless ; and before the end comes the whole landscape is suffused with a dark and regal blue. Darker and darker it becomes, changing from blue to purple, but never black. There is no mourning in an English summer night. Is not this the best and the wisest after all ? There might have been a sunset scene from Pilatus, or a

day closed with the full glory of an Alpine sunset. All this summer day, instead of pottering idly about the confines of an English farm, there might have been the excitement of travel, sight succeeding sight, impression following impression. There might have been visions of glaciers and the roseate pictures of sun expiring on the bosom of the snow. But would it have been so much better than this, after all? Would it have been sweeter, purer, or more restful? Would happiness have been deeper or more abiding for ever with us than this? The absolutely convincing answer here in the silence of the summer night is given by "the hands that hold one another and are still." The

absorbing silence is alone broken
by the click of the farm-house
latch ; and so we close the gate
of the summer night behind us !

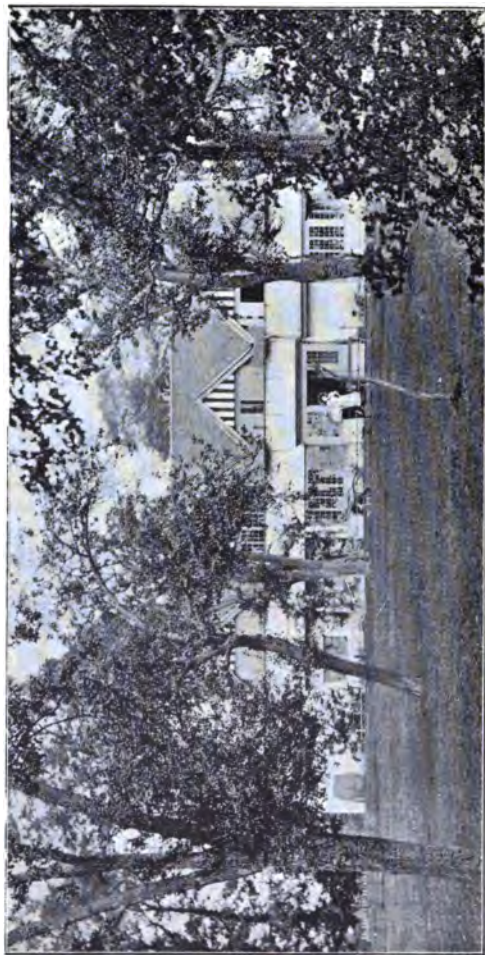


UNDER THE APPLE TREES.

To the fields away ! for Nature presses
On toiling foreheads a balmy kiss;
There's nothing so sweet as her wild caresses,
No love more full to the lips than this.







ALONE IN THE DESERTED FARM.

UNDER THE APPLE TREES.

“Oh, but you will be so dreadfully dull!” came in a moaning chorus from affectionate friends when I gravely announced my determination of settling down for a month or more at Walnut Tree Farm, in the delightful garden-land of apples, and hops, and hayfields, and cathedrals, and battle scenes, and rose-covered cottages, a ten good miles from anywhere.



But this is what they always say when I meditate a "retreat," when I advocate a pause in the busy throb of life, when I dream of the time when the footlights glare no more and theatres are in the banished background, and I can quietly settle down to write that novel which has never yet been started, and to jot down those recollections of a half-century not wholly destitute of interest to those who have studied the art of amusement in the greatest city in the world. All the same, I candidly own that under certain conditions the country, a country house, and country life generally, can be desperately, deplorably dull. It would be simply maddening to me, or to anyone of

the same temperament, to be dragged out of bed every morning whether you liked it or not, by the sound of an incessant gong ; to be placed down, before the day has yet warmed itself, at a hideous meal called breakfast, where unnaturally hungry men and women consume vast piles of flesh and fowl, of eggs and rashers, of toast and muffins, of preserves and dreadfully indigestible compounds, as a first instalment of a day of gorging. It may be wrong, but I detest the man or woman who "makes a good breakfast."


It would be dull and depressing in the extreme if I were parcelled out and ticketed, and pigeon-holed and ordered off by a kind host or hostess to the pleasure I least en-

joyed. I don't like to be told when I am to ride, or when to drive, or the precise hour when I am to shoot, or the exact second when I am to play cricket or lawn tennis, or who my companions are to be throughout the live-long day. There is no deadly dullness like the discipline, admirable as it may be, of a country house, or the eternal drive to and fro to the neighbouring market town to do commissions for other people and nothing for yourself. But those who advocate these ghastly terrors of country life have not the smallest conception of the beautiful art of pure laziness, when you are absolutely your own master, and have no superior officer whatever. There is no "breakfast gong" at

Walnut Tree Farm, though I am often in the meadow at five in the morning. How in the wide world can a man be dull who is suddenly possessed of the cosiest house in the world, in the heart of a country far more beautiful than I have ever seen before in England ; with a smart little mare and a comfortable old cob in the stables, each ready to do its twenty miles a day without turning a hair ; with a pretty light cart, fashioned for the hills and dips of this mountainous district ; with horses and dogs to pet, and Natural History to study at will, to say nothing of a comfortable pony if the whim seizes one for a botanical ramble in the lanes and over the common, in fact over the hills and far away in

search of pleasure and information combined ?

If I were a guest instead of a master, no doubt the case might be very different indeed. I should not like to be told that I could not ride "Olive" to-day because somebody had to be sent into Great Malvern on important business, and wanted the mare, or that unfortunately "Felix" could not be put at my disposal for a gallop over Castle Morton Common, because he had been promised to someone else, but that if I wanted to enjoy myself, or was in search of rational amusement, I might take a pony-cart full of children to Tewkesbury. But when I am in the proud position of being able to open a lattice window in a



romantic old corner in the Elizabethan farm in order to call to the cheery groom and order my day's pleasure as I will, whether it be battlefield, cathedral town, local race meeting, rummage sale for the parish church, or village flower show, then the case is vastly different. To me, at any rate, whose life is plunged in one incessant din, riot, and racket, it is a supreme rest to be wholly free of the railways, and to be utterly independent of the iron road. I have not seen a railway station or heard the scream of an engine for ten whole days. The trap comes to the door, away we go down the dip, over the breezy common, away, away, rattling along through countless acres of apple trees and hop

fields, the world all so green and beautiful that it seems as if all England were one cultivated park ; on and on past these picturesque old black-and-white, half-timbered farms and cottages that nestle in dips of the down or cosy corners of the meadow, until the great square decorated tower of Hereford, or Tewkesbury, or the exquisite spires of Ledbury, or Little or Great Malvern, come in sight, and for an hour or so the lazy traveller is enabled to explore the old abbeys and monasteries and religious houses and hospitals for the poor that still exist in this lovely land, which veritably flows with milk and honey. What a rich and luxurious country it is, where the monks of old built

their peaceful homes under the hills in this beautiful garden of old England! Salmon from the Wye and the Severn; apples in abundance weighing down the roadside trees of all Worcestershire and Herefordshire; acres and acres of pale-green hops, in wild and luxuriant festoons of blossom; all the air as we drive along from farm to city perfumed with new-mown hay, bean fields, garden roses, and sweet-smelling clover. Then, after a brisk trot through the very heart of the country, we alight at some old-world inn in the Cathedral city; an inn of the old coaching days, with an arched entrance, where hang well-cured hams and gammons of bacon; no modern com-

pany hotel, with uniformed porters or fashionable waiters, all obsequiousness and white choker; but an inn left to us from the England of the past, where, when the trap passes under the arch, "Ting!" goes the bell for the cheery ostler, out comes a smiling landlady, and you feel that warmest welcome which Shenstone recorded on the window-pane at Henley, and are able to forget the world of London far, far away.

Nor are these suddenly-improvised drives without their amusing adventures that dissipate all idea of dulness in a country life. I had observed a placard or so in the adjacent villages to the effect that there was to be a local race-meeting at Bosbury. The village

children, as I drive past them, stare with delight at the pictures of daring steeplechasers taking hurdles and hedges in a fashion worthy of the Agricultural Hall. I doubt if it will be a bit like that at Bosbury ; but, at any rate, I will investigate the matter for myself. The first thing to ascertain is, Where is Bosbury ? I have not the very faintest idea, but cross questions and an ordnance map shall be my guide. It is past Eastnor Castle and its lovely park, through old Ledbury with its quaint black and white market-hall, which looks as if a house had been elevated on four bed-posts, and then a few miles on, among the hops and the apples, and "Anyone will guide you to

Bosbury." I had been told that Bosbury boasted a wonderful old inn with a black oak parlour, centuries old ; an inn with walls a yard thick, and heaps of chests and settles, and chimney corners, and blue and white Worcester-shire china, and, believing my informant, came naturally to the conclusion that if Bosbury possessed so remarkable an inn, Bosbury would also possess something to eat and drink at about middle day. At any rate, it would be a pretty excursion, and it might be just as well to interview Bosbury in order to see what accommodation there might be for "Olive" or "Felix" when the race day came and the country folk poured into the little village.

Away we went, with the nose of faithful "Felix" pointed towards Bosbury, intending to arrive there at the luncheon hour. Safely enough we arrived, as hungry as hunters. They were putting up the grand stand in the riverside meadow, and to my great delight there was a local cricket match on the other side of the bridge, and after having inspected the old oak-room, now the meeting-place of the Odd Fellows, or the Buffaloes, or some such deserving set, and having duly admired the old-fashioned kitchen garden, and seen the faithful "Felix" comfortably settled down to his "feed"—for the master who does not look after his beast before himself is not worth the name—then arose the

important question, "What can you give us to eat?"

The answer came like a thunderbolt to one whose appetite was keen-edged with the invigorating morning air, and who abjures the popular institution known as breakfast. "What can I give you?" answered the quiet, unconcerned landlady, who was polishing up in the bar. "Well, exactly what you have got yourself. We would be content with anything—eggs and bacon would do," and then another pause, a shuddery pause, "or even bread and cheese!" I am very sorry," came the answer, but we have nothing: we are eaten out ourselves, and have just had our dinner. It is difficult to get provisions hereabouts, and they

seldom eat meat at Bosbury until Saturday or Sunday !” This was on Tuesday, and once more an uncomfortable, gnawing feeling possessed me. Then a beautiful ray of light stole over the features of the landlady who had just dined. Said she, “ But I could cook anything that you brought in.” She meant that I could go out into the village to forage. I went outside and looked up the village street in despair. It consisted of about a dozen cottages, but we were gleefully informed by a grinning boy that it did contain two shops—a butcher’s and a grocer’s. I drew the butcher’s shop absolutely blank ; they would not kill again till the end of the week. “ They never eat meat at

Bosbury except on a Saturday or Monday." The matter was getting desperate, when we arrived trembling at the grocer's door. Happily, this worthy man was not out of sardines, some fresh eggs had mercifully just come in; he could manage a rasher of bacon, but he was out of jams, as the season's preserves had not yet arrived. So we marched back in something like triumph, armed with the details of a sufficient meal to be cooked at the Bosbury Inn. And a very good meal indeed it proved to be. There is nothing happens like the unexpected. It was the first time in my life that I had ever presented myself at an English inn, been sent out by the innkeeper to cater

for my meal, enjoyed a kind of picnic in an old oaken parlour, and left my host far richer in provisions than when I arrived, half-starving, at his inhospitable doors.

When this curious meal was over I discovered, to my surprise, that a sudden flood of excitement had passed over hitherto deserted Bosbury. The inn-yard was crowded with gigs, carts, and shandrydans of every description. "Felix," secure in his loose box, could hear the champing of innumerable bits. But "Felix" was digesting his feed with satisfaction. What had happened so suddenly to half-starved Bosbury? Joy of joys, it was the local cricket match! There is nothing I love

so much in the world as watching a cricket match in an English country village, and here was the old-world, never-to-be-forgotten village cricket restored to me. No pavilion at Bosbury, no fashionable boundaries, or boundary hits—the grass carefully mown and rolled for about fifty square yards, and after that the kind of rough turf on which the outfielders stood ankle-deep—the kind of stunted stubble that would stop dead short the drives of a W.G. Grace or the cuts of a Murdoch. There was not even a cricket tent at Bosbury. A deal table under the trees accommodated the “notcher” or scorer. He might well have “notched” up the runs, as they did in the old days, with a pen-

knife on a stick cut out of the hedge. Hence the word "notching," so familiar at village cricket. The somewhat limited company, consisting of the parson's and schoolmaster's families, and the friends of the competitors were politely provided in the old style with rough, rude benches, brought by the little "nippers" from the alehouse parlour. Why do I use the word "nippers"? It is a term that belongs more to Wiltshire than Worcestershire, but it is curiously connected in my mind with the country yokels who swarm on the old roller shafts that figures prominently in every picture of a country cricket match. No picture of a village cricket ground is complete without a


roller. "Sweep and roll" is the cricket cry. We used to say in the old days that "nipper," applied to cricket ground boys was derived on the "lucus a non lucendo" principle, from the Greek "nipto," because they don't wash. And do they seriously tell me that it is dull, this daily, homely, health-giving life at a country farm? Dull, when I have driven for a dozen miles or so through the apple grounds of Worcestershire and Hereford; dull, when I have had a picnic in an old roadside inn; dull, when I am sitting here with my pipe in my mouth, on a rough, uncomfortable bench, watching every ball, and predicting that the slim youngster over there at the farther end who has

never bowled one ball off the difficult wicket the whole afternoon, who can break from the "off" or from the "leg" as he wills it, and who, undoubtedly, as the cricket phrase goes, "bowls with his head," will one day be included in his county eleven! He may have graduated at Bosbury, on the village cricket ground, but he will take his cricket degree, if I am not mistaken, at Lord's, or the Oval. And this simple game of village cricket which amused me for so many hours set my mind thinking how impossible it is ever to be dull in any farmhouse, or in any part of the country that boasts an apple orchard, or a paddock, a stump of a tree, a bat and a ball. In some such turfy attachment to



a country house the great "W.G." became the cricketer of the world, according to his own recorded account, and it seems to me that the best cricketers have paddocks or orchards, or enthusiastic sisters, who are as fond of cricket as themselves. Talk about being dull in the heart of the country! Why, the cricket enthusiast, located at a farm with an orchard paddock, never stirs a hundred yards in the course of the day from his amateur cricket ground.

I well remember that in the days of my youth my excellent father, anxious to make his public school boys happy during the holidays, hired for us a farm at Boveney, on the Thames, at that time a wild, romantic, tumble-down



old farm called Boveney Court, hidden among the trees between Windsor and Bray. It was on the farm grounds that the Eton boys feasted on the Fourth of June and on Election Saturday. I never shall forget old Boveney Court, or its tiny church among the cornfields—a church then served every Sunday by one of the Eton masters—for it was on the news coming down of the capture of Sebastopol that my father and my brother and I rang a joyous peal from the belfry of old Boveney Court, in honour of the English victory, much to the astonishment of the sleepy villagers. And I remember old Boveney on the Thames from another circumstance. On the top of a hayrick in the old farm



I first read Tennyson's poem of "Maud," which had just come down in its old green cover hot from the press. That first edition I have carefully preserved. But Thames-side life was not then as it is now. We scarcely saw a boat pass up river between week in and week out, and I could have sculled undisturbed from Surly Hall to the Red Lion at Henley. But beautiful and attractive as was the country round old Boveney Court, as ill-luck, or good-luck, would have it, there was an apple orchard in the rear of the house too tempting for the resistance of juvenile cricket. I can see my father coming out in the midst of the agonies of writing a leader for the old *Morning Chronicle*, pen

in hand, or in mouth, and addressing the cricketing delinquents as follows: "Look here, boys and girls, around you is a wide space of unfrequented country, where you are at liberty to wander to the north, south, east, or west. Your actions are free and uncontrolled. You can be off to the right or be lost to the left. Within a stone's throw is a space of free land known as Dorney Common, an excellent cricketing ground, where your shouts and reproaches would be wasted on the air. But you *will* come and play cricket in this wretched paddock and exactly under my study window!" This argument was unanswerable, but I fear that the attractions of the apple orchard

for embryo cricketers will never seriously diminish. The boys and girls of the "nineties," as of the "fifties," will play cricket within a dozen yards of any inhabited mansion.

Here, at any rate, is a case in point. Attached to Walnut Tree Farm, on the hill, is a smaller farm, hidden by the trees, but down in a dell by the roadside. I pass it every morning as I drive out to explore the country ; I pass it in the gloaming as "Felix" or "Olive" struggles up "the dip" to the old farm gates. That sister farm possesses a fatal apple orchard. It was taken recently by a large family, who, according to their earliest impressions of the place, were prepared to scour the

country, to go up all the mountains, to walk twenty or thirty miles a day, to hunt for ferns and butterflies, to become botanists entomologists, but to my certain knowledge for the last ten days, attractive as the surrounding country may be, not one single member of the "united eleven" party has ever yet stirred out of that cricket paddock or orchard. It is the worst possible place in the wide world for the game of cricket. The paddock is studded with apple trees that stop every hit. If the ball misses the back stop, it rushes into the road and careers down an interminable hill. But cricket in some form or another is never absent from that farm-house paddock. If


you got up at six o'clock in the morning the farm hands would be milking the cows, and the residents playing cricket. In the full heat of the day there they are, hard at work, batting and bowling. In the evening, when the light is trying to the eyes, particularly when the growing darkness is aggravated with apple branches, the sound of the merry cricketers mixes with the drowsy hum of the insects, and is appropriately accompanied by the flutter and flitter of the midnight bat. The attractions of apple orchard cricket are irresistible, and I have observed that on these strictly family occasions the head of the house or paterfamilias is always "in," and the long-legged girls

of the family are invariably fagging out. Only yesterday I was driving past the playground of a village school, on the edge of a wind-swept common. The cricket-loving schoolmaster was apparently enjoying a very extensive innings and the boys were scouting to the boundary hits of the worthy dominie.

How can anyone of a philosophic turn of mind be ever really dull in an old English farm-house, when to his daily wanderings far and near under the apple trees are added the pleasures and excitement of expectancy? The first interest of the morning is not so much the papers a day old that the faithful postman will bring, or the letters which seem to come



from another world, particularly when they contain applications for St. Giles's parish taxes, or the annual subscription for the maintenance of a London square. Fancy a London square, however "rus in urbe," after the farm of the Walnut Trees! The great excitement of a real out-of-the-world farm-house, is whether the postman will bring the meat from Tewkesbury. On the kindly postman depends not only our humble dinner, but the dinners of those upon whose faithful services we rely. If he forgets us we must starve or feed upon apples or vegetables attenuated by a plague of earwigs, from which I am bound to say we suffer even in this rural paradise. There is a fold in every



roseleaf, and into it the insinuating earwig creeps. There are summers in which the farm-house resident is tortured with a plague of wasps, or ants, or bluebottles ; but this damp year is dedicated, I regret to say, to earwigs. They have not only devoured all the fruit, and vegetables, percolated the apricots, and ruined the window plants, but they venture with gross familiarity into the details of our private life. An industrious lady engaged on a life-long piece of artistic embroidery has to shake it free from insinuating earwigs, who lurk in the recesses of her dainty handiwork. The bed and blankets after dark, have to be cleared of an army of earwigs. Whenever you pour out a libation

of water in the basin more earwigs are drowned before your eyes. They are the most hardened and poison-defying earwigs that a damp season has ever bred, for though every night I pepper myself out of a castor with an ingenious mixture manufactured by myself, every morning a drowned earwig is discovered in my lemon-squash, and a reckless insect has actually had the pluck to commit suicide in the receptacle for water contained in the cage of a favourite and occasionally angry parrot. After that the deluge of earwigs. They horrified me at first, but now that a friendly doctor assures me that they don't creep into your ears or wander on to the recesses of your brain, I feel defiant like the child-



ren, and "don't care." As to what happened to "don't care," I'm at the present moment supremely indifferent, presumably because our daily life under the apple-trees is inexpressibly happy. Dull ! at a country farmhouse ? Why we keep a calendar like school-children, and mark out every day of our summer banishment, not with a cheer, but with a long drawn sigh.



PEEPS OF OLD ENGLAND.

I can only hear, if I pause to listen,
The sweep of scythe through the falling corn ;
I can only see how the sun can glisten,
Its dewdrop tears in the fields at morn.








AN INN OF STRANGE MEETINGS.

PEEPS OF OLD ENGLAND.

A lovely Autumn morning
dawned upon Malvern Chase!
For the first time for twenty dull
and dripping days I had been able
to see an assertive gleam of light
in the dip of the distant hills.
When I looked out of the farm-
house window at six o'clock the
more than welcome sunlight
dappled the orchard grass with
shadows, and far away in the dis-


tance I could see a solitary reaper, with bent back, lowering the yellow harvest in a bright patch of gold, that stood out against the insistent emerald green. A flock of geese, grey and white, strutted about in the long meadow grass; gobbling and chortling utterly regardless of the doom registered in the approaching feast of St. Michael. Life and happiness asserted themselves everywhere. "Felix," "Olive," and the fat pony got up amateur races on their own account round and round the paddock, down the dip and up again, kicking up their heels in the full enjoyment of freedom, and eventually arriving with a triumphant whinny at the gate of the stable-yard.



A veritable parliament of hens had assembled at the root of the old walnut tree, and were holding a kind of meeting of mutual congratulation, with a handsome and conceited cockerel for president. The diminutive black and white piglets, not yet weaned, over which the good doctor had licked his lips when he visited us, describing minutely how they ought to be cooked, and how appetising they might be made in their lacteal state with the aid of dried currants or Goldsmith's prune sauce, had wandered unchecked on a foraging expedition into the kitchen garden, out of which they were soon indignantly routed by the "handy boy," who may be a genius in the art of mowing the lawn with a blunt



machine, but has a singular capacity for whistling every recognised music hall song with false notes and utterly out of tune. In fact, harmony was distributed generally about the precincts of the hitherto sleeping house. The cook, who is of a sentimental turn of mind, reminded us of one who "Wore a Wreath of Roses," as she wandered, bearing "butter in a lordly dish," in and out of the adjacent dairy; the lady's maid at the neighbouring rose-covered cottage proclaimed her Welsh origin with a few bars of "Sweet Jenny Jones"; whilst the groom asserted his Cockney descent as he wisped down the mare, with Mr. Gus Elen's "Woa, Mare! Woa, Mare!" promising her in the near future



the desirable "little bit of corn." So far as that was concerned, I was determined that the mare should at least earn it; so, still from the pleasant window, I hollaoed out the orders for the day, which were to start with a drive to Tewkesbury through the leafy lanes and grass-fringed roads, and over the breezy commons, which are all that are left to us of the glorious district known as Malvern Chase.

What can be more delightful than to drive on such a sunny morning through the very heart of historical old England? With unsettled plans, pleasure is more safely secured. What if I made an early call at Birtsmere-ton Keep, the moated grange that still exists

to remind us of days when the portcullis was down and the draw-bridge up, and Margaret of Anjou was hiding behind a secret panel to avoid the searching eyes of the retainers of King Edward of the White Roses? The whole country teems with interest, with its abbeys and cathedrals and religious houses scattered far and near; but somehow or other, the fancy possessed me more for a careless wander through the delicious country than for the acquisition of antiquarian knowledge. What with the Pyramids of mummied Kings of Egypt, and the tombs and palaces of dead and gone princes and rulers in India, that swarm within a distance of ten miles of every inhabited and

uninhabited city ; what with the Buddhist temples of Ceylon, and the Joss Houses of China, and the idols and various forms of Phallic and other worship in Japan ; what with cathedrals destroyed by Cromwell, and pyramids built by Rameses, and tombs of marble erected by Indian lovers, and heathen monstrosities in the way of hideous architecture, frank paganism, and indescribable filth, I have come to the conclusion that I have seen almost enough of churches, temples, and tombs to last me for a considerable time to come. I have begun to avoid a sight or a show place as I would a pestilence. For to tell the honest truth the Pyramids of Egypt, the Taj Mahal at Agra, the marbles of

Delhi, the Buddhist temple at Kandy, and the Niagara of America take a good deal of beating.

So when I found a train at Tewkesbury I stepped into it, having a consoling idea that I might be landed sooner or later at Stratford-on-Avon, and into the very heart of Shakespeare land. I have travelled by slow, and what I may call unconventional, trains in my life ; but this one was the very slowest and the least conventional of all in my recollection. I remember once taking the long and, I am bound to say, tedious railway journey between Lisbon and Madrid. The train was protected by an armed soldier, in charge of a detachment, with loaded rifles, apparently to guard

us against brigands or robbers; but our protector was on this occasion rather more of a sportsman than a military man. At a wayside station, where one would have thought his services would have been more particularly required, he would exchange his rifle for a fowling-piece, and go out into the country with the station-master, in search of snipe or quail, whilst the passengers kicked their heels at the shanty called a station, and endeavoured to while away the time with cigarettes and sour wine. But there were times also, much to our personal annoyance, when this sport-loving Spanish warrior would induce the guard to stop the train in the very heart of a flat and desolate country, miles

away from any station, and scour the arid plains in search of consoling game. Eventually we arrived at Madrid, secure from the brigands, and I trust with a good bag of game for our military escort.

And then I recall one lovely summer Sunday morning, many years ago, when I "happened upon" a very unconventional train and a decidedly original guard. I was going down to the Isle of Thanet for a blow, and it was in the full glow of the ripened Kentish cherry season. The guard or the engine driver, or someone responsible for our well-being, had apparently a great thirst upon him, which could only be conveniently appeased by ripe fruit.

To my surprise, the train stopped dead short at a wayside station—I always think of the incident as I pass that cherry orchard station, which runs right through a forest of fruit trees. The stoppage might have been accidental or intentional; but the thirsty guard was ill-advised enough to climb a fence and fill his pockets with ripe cherries in full view of a Sunday excursion train. Such an example on the part of constituted authority was not to be resisted, so in less than a second every carriage door was opened, and with a wild yell there was a stampede into that orchard. In vain the luckless guard shouted, and called the refractory passengers back; it was too late, and when

the Sunday train sped on its way to Faversham, I fear the Newington cherry orchard was not so full of fruit as it was at daybreak on that glorious summer day. It was a temptation too great to be resisted ; and, indeed, can only be obviated in the future by the strict appointment of a cherry-resisting guard. I have always wondered what the fruit farmer thought of his decimated cherry trees when he came from church.

My journey from Tewkesbury to Stratford-on-avon was scarcely less original for those who both encountered and enjoyed it. We had not advanced very far when the train stopped at a pretty roadside station, and we were told that it was no use sitting in the car-


riage as we had to wait at least half-an-hour or more to make some mysterious connection. There was to be no change of train, only an interminable wait. The guard, who was a good-natured fellow, pulled out of his pocket a huge lump of bread and cheese and proceeded to walk leisurely up the hill. Instinctively I knew that the hunk of bread and cheese must necessarily mean beer, or at least cider. Had there been a refreshment room at the little doll's house station smothered in Gloire de Dijon roses, deep purple clematis, and clove pinks, I knew there would have been no necessity for that solitary journey of the hungry guard. I followed in his footsteps, and felt inclined to say, for the

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sun was burning hot, "Does the long road wind up hill all the way?" He would have been certain to reply, "Yes; to the very end"; and I knew what that end would be—the village alehouse. I had started very early, and comparatively speaking without breakfast; but it was astounding how that lump of farmhouse bread and Gloucester cheese fascinated me. If I had dared do so, I would have bribed the guard out of his humble luncheon. It was more desirable to me at that moment than a dozen fat natives at Pimm's, a basin of turtle soup at Birches', or a well-cooked chop done to a turn at the club. I broke an important commandment. I coveted my neighbour's goods. And then I thought

of the ludicrousness of the situation. Here was I, a passenger by a train, arrested in my course at a wayside station, all flowers and no refreshments, walking up a hill by the side of a railway guard eating bread and cheese which I coveted. All's well that ends well. On the top of the desolate hill was an inn, presiding over the inn was a landlady with a larder crammed to repletion with bread and cheese. It was the easiest thing in the world to order a plate of bread and cheese for myself, a mug of ale for the guard, another mug or mugs of ale for various unattached porters who wandered carelessly to the haven of bitter beer, whilst the poor old train grunted out its wasted energy at a sideway, and


to pass a right merry and jovial half - hour standing, not with "grooms and porters on the bridge," but with guards and porters at the roadside village inn whilst waiting for a dilatory train. But such is the selfishness or the mean envy of human nature that I did not seem to enjoy my bit of bread and cheese at the inn half so much as I should have relished the guard's lump of satisfying luncheon, carved with a clasp knife and an assisting thumb. I always envy the devourers of bread and cheese with clasp knives and a sturdy thumb. They did it years ago in Wiltshire, when I was at school, sitting on stiles, with fat bacon and bread. They do it now with Gloucester cheese



and farmhouse bread, and these lucky railway guards always manage to get the bottom crust !

There were several other stoppages before we arrived at Shakespeare's birthplace ; but no one seemed to mind them very much. Picnic parties, all armed with reticules, a strong bag, or wicker basket, got in and out at wayside stations. I could see that the forthcoming uncomfortable meal was being conveyed to a damp field in detachments. The resistance piece was in the wicker basket, carried by the broadest-shouldered man of the party. The reticules concealed the German silver spoons and forks, and the string bags whisked about the details of the impending salad.

Even "baby" had some salt or pepper concealed about her frolicsome person. And then there were fishing parties, melancholy fishing parties, that got in and out at stations, for the Avon was already in evidence. I don't think that I should care very much to be asked to a fishing party, or to be elected as a member of a fishing club. The members are externally morose, and socially self-assertive. Fishermen, even when destined for the Avon on a heavenly autumn morning, never seem to indulge in much hilarity. A laugh would distract the fish even miles distant. In fact, fishermen always remind me of disappointed dramatists. They would like to angle for, strike, hook, and land their critics,



and they would enjoy cutting the barbed hook out of his dramatic gills. I have had sad experiences of all sorts and conditions of fishermen. Educated as the cautious propeller of a Thames punt by my father, who was the most persistently silent fisherman of my acquaintance, taught to hold on by a branch, a twig, a sapling, a blade of grass, an anything, whilst the sparkling minnow was "spun" into an enticing pool, I inherited a dislike, nay, a positive disdain, for the "gentle craft," which no time will obliterate. I was once storm-bound at a fishing inn at Glendalough, in the Connemara district of Ireland, and I believe that had I once more sat down to dinner with the returned fishermen, and




listened to their piscatorial conversation for another five minutes, I should have gone raving mad. They talked fish from seven o'clock to midnight without a pause. But my most dreadful fishing experience was in the Scilly Isles one memorable summer. I was the only resident at the island inn, save one man who had trained himself to catch "pollock." He had taken up his quarters at the inn for several months, and he had caught "pollock" every day, wet or fine, week in week out, until time had no meaning left for him. He caught more "pollock" than the inn and village could hold. He provided the breakfast, luncheon, and dinner table with "pollock," till I loathed the sight of him and

his accursed fish. He taught or cajoled all the villagers to catch "pollock." He coerced his long-suffering wife into a sea boat every day of her wretched life, in order that she might sit in the stern, wet through, and see her lord and master catch "pollock." When day broke he was splicing his lines, when day died he was mending them; when night came he was dreaming stertorously on the sofa of uncaught "pollock," through a mirage of Scotch whiskey.

At last the rambling and unconventional train draws up at the platform of Stratford-on-Avon. How I have watched for this haven of pure and delicious rest, as we have been dodging in and out of the many curves of Shake-



speare's silent river ! There is no mistake about it now. There is the grey spiked steeple, rising out of a green labyrinth of trees, like the everlasting Oxford with its "dreaming spires." Stratford needs not June, nor July, nor August, nor any month in the recorded year, for "beauty's heightening" ; but I love Stratford best when she is utterly and absolutely alone. I have visited her on commemoration days, and Shakespeare's Birthdays, and Jubilee occasions, at times when the little market town was possessed by actors and actresses and members of the Fourth Estate, when the old Town Hall was full of political and literary dignitaries making Shakespeare speeches one



against the other ; on a memorable occasion when Mr. Henry Irving, bare-headed, with exquisite grace, taste, and courtesy, dedicated to Shakespeare's birthplace a drinking fountain, presented by one of America's prominent citizens and journalists. I have seen old Stratford-on-Avon in every kind of atmosphere, winter and summer, but have never loved it so well as when, happily on some silent pilgrimage, I have got the dear old place all to myself. And so it was to-day. The train stopped, my companions vanished, and I was left wandering through the streets charged with delightful memories. I believe Stratford-on-Avon to be the very cleanest and most fascinating town throughout Old


England. It looks to me as if it had been swept and dusted every morning by an army of Warwickshire housemaids. Did you ever see anywhere else in the wide world such brass knockers and handles, polished to such an extent that you can see your face in them as you pass by on the other side? Did you ever see in any market town such gabled houses, or dormer windows, or half-timbered cottages, or climbing magnolias, or creeping clematis; or recognised such an atmosphere of perfect peace? "Where shall I go first?" is the instant suggestion to my mind. I cannot resist the fascination of the old church, its leafy avenue, its walk among the gravestones by the side of the



river, its perfect sense of rest, its incomparable charm. Inside they may have ruined the old church, they may have restored it beyond all recognition, they may have ritualised it, and dandified it, and unfortunately destroyed its Old-World significance ; but change it, or decorate it, or break up its character as you will, at the side of the sanctuary is Shakespeare's tomb, and under the sanctuary floor is Shakespeare's beloved dust. You cannot tear yourself away from that immortal sanctuary, that pre-eminently hallowed ground.

The imagination runs riot, as it must whenever Shakespeare arises to the surface—more than ever when you are in the little cottage where he was born, in the school

where he was educated, in the village of Shottery where he wooed his wife; in the wreck of New Place where he breathed his last; in the old English sanctuary where he rests for evermore. How tear yourself from such manifold associations, from the pew where he kneeled in prayer, or the register that records his baptism and death? I stand under the porch of the old church of Stratford-on-Avon, and recall one midnight not so many years ago, when three of us, all old friends, joined hands in the moonlight and promised that whenever we revisited that sacred spot there would be a thought and a prayer for the one who was gone. Two of us remain. The third is re-



membered in our prayers. But away to the dear old "Red Horse," with its welcome bunch of grapes hanging down from the old English sign-board. Good wine needs no bush indeed, and the warmest welcome ever given to literary man is accorded by my good host Colbourne and his accomplished wife when any of us pass by that way. What a host of men of letters have congregated at the "Red Horse" of Stratford-on-Avon between the days of Washington Irving and Willie Winter, who annually makes his pilgrimage from Staten Island, New York, to the Warwickshire hamlet where Shakespeare was born. Whenever I go Stratford-on-avon Willie Winter has just left. I can

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see him with his earnest face, in the corner of Washington Irving's room, handling the old poker so carefully preserved, looking up at the literary and dramatic pictures that crowd upon the walls, and talking Shakespeare as few other living dramatic critics can discuss the Immortal Bard.

What a delicious spot for a dreamy afternoon ! The old bowling green at the back of the "Red Horse ;" the old-world flower garden, the delight and pride of mine hostess ; the never-to-be-forgotten birth-place, in Hanley-street, where good Mr. Savage is still at his desk working away at his manuscripts ; the sacred rooms, still described by a couple of delightful and amiable sisters, who



make welcome every stranger, and have fairly succeeded to the posts vacated by the Misses Chattaway of the old times, dead and gone ; the inevitable visit to Anne Hathaway's cottage at Shottery, the talk with the last link between the past and the present, who shows us the old bedstead, the cottage-spun "fine linen," the venerable chimney corner, and dismisses us on our way with a "God-speed," and a bunch of freshly-plucked lavender from the garden where Shakespeare saw the sun set, seated on a bench by the old well. Unhappily, the day is not long enough for all the delights of dear old Stratford. It is merely a glimpse, a run through, a shake of the hand, and a promise to

come back again some day, if God wills it so. Stratford-on-Avon has for me the calm and sweet solemnity of an old English church-yard. We leave it, never in sorrow, always in peace. The place seems to fold itself over you like the wide branches of an old yew tree. You are embraced by its very shadow. And so we bid farewell to our old friends, thankful that we abide still in their memory, and so we pass on into shadow-land, nerve ourselves to the contemplation of the busy world again, re-enter the unconventional train, and find "Olive" waiting at Tewkesbury station, in the silent gloaming to take us, pure I hope in heart, unchanged in spirit, to the dear old farm of the "Walnut Tree!"



A PAINTER'S DREAMLAND.

Here was the peace ! here the deep haven-rest !
Here, thankful, stretched upon the flow'r-starred
sod,
I drank new gratitude from Nature's breast,
And breathed thanksgiving on the lap of God !

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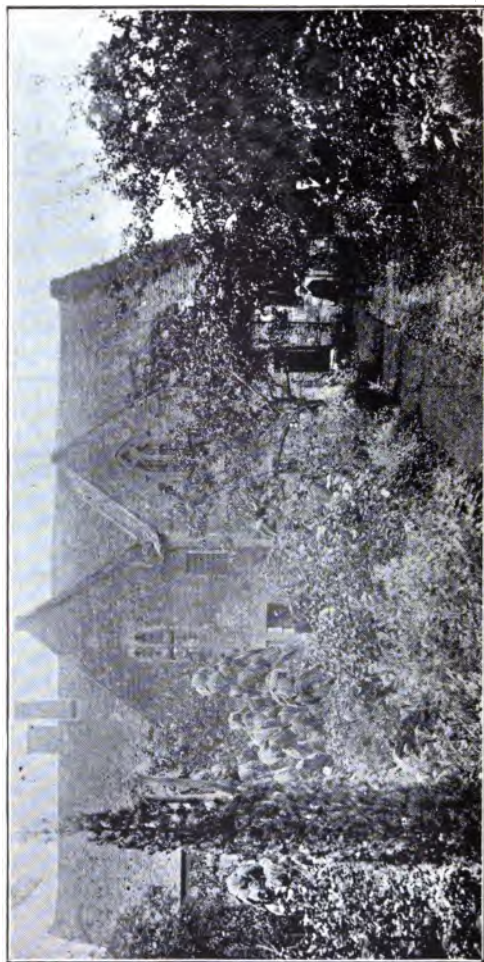
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A BIT OF OLD BROADWAY.

A PAINTER'S DREAMLAND.

"Once we said in our despairing,
This must break our spirits now ;
But we bore it, and are bearing,
Only do not ask us how."

This was the mournful cry of despondency that came wailing round the apple and the walnut trees, uttered by the inhabitants of the isolated Worcestershire farm. All nature had changed to the minor key. The most dismal


ditties conceivable were heard in the once sunny dairy, and the erst cheerful stable yard. Damp hens crouched under soaking hay-ricks. The ungathered harvest lay rotting and sprouting in the deserted fields, and for all this sudden wave of depression we had only to thank the vengeful St. Swithin and the last fatal moon. And I am bound to say that the saint of the weather, the moon, the omens, or the portents took it severely out of the harvest time, exacting his wind, storm, and rain tax to the uttermost farthing. Literally it poured from morning until night, and all through the night into the bargain, without a second's interval, for more days than I care to remember. The garden path



of the roses became a muddy slide ; the lawn on which we had stretched ourselves, dreamily, lazily looking up at the pale blue and restful sky, was a quaggy morass. The wild Worcestershire commons, once so fresh with the scent of new-mown hay, the lovely aftermath, deserted now by gobbling geese and browsing cattle, were dotted over with lakelets of rain water.

The worst of it was that a wilful spirit of recklessness stole over the once contented farm and its ideal residents. Unholy desires for the theatre and the music hall crept unconsciously into the concerns of every-day life. Up in the corner of the rose-scented drawing-room, where, in the evening

twilight, some white clad-figure had steeped and soothed our senses in Beethoven, Mozart, and Chopin, we heard, as the rain pattered against the latticed windows, some rollicking jig, a tempestuous onslaught of "The Rowdy Dowdy Boys!" and the irritating refrain of "After the Ball." I regret to make the confession, but hitherto secreted packs of cards were furtively introduced even before the luncheon hour, and the old farm walls, that had echoed to Tennyson, and Browning, and Matthew Arnold, from some soft reader, in the chastened hours of noontide and evening, were defiled with the ceaseless cry "It's your anti," and the wild appeals for "another jack pot."



There was only one strong excitement to vary the monotony of the endless rain. One dull grey evening, when even farmhouse life became a trial, "my lady" was standing in the clematis-covered porch, watching and praying for one ray of light on the gloom-capped hills, her faithful green parrot perched as usual on her shoulder, the parrot she had purchased of a West Indian lad when the ship that bore her to the Golden Gate anchored in the harbour of Barbadoes, the parrot who, at any rate, was an endless source of amusement to her assembled guests, the one cheerful green spot in the long grey days. We heard a shriek! The parrot, weary of the monotony of captivity, and

doubtless sick of our melancholy society, winged its way far over the damp fields, and settled, as far as we could see, on the very top-most branches of a gigantic elm. Oh, that parrot ! No one had the faintest idea that it possessed the power of flight, or that a talkative bird could suddenly become so ominously silent. Every endearing tone and call was answered, and only, if we strained our ears to listen, by a melancholy and despondent croak. Darker and darker became the night, the whole village was aroused, and the champion climber awakened from his cottage bed. I should not myself have cared, even with the offer of a handsome bribe, to climb a formidable tree in order to face an attack



from a bird, who, though loving to its mistress, has particularly objectionable habits towards others of her immediate acquaintance. All the village athlete could succeed in doing that night was to drive the frightened bird to a far higher tree, but one more conveniently situated for observation. Oh, drat that bird, for the misery it caused us and the sleepless night that was the consequence of its execrable career! To call "Polly, Polly; pretty Polly;" to whistle, to repeat every familiar phrase known to the bird, becomes in time not only fatiguing, but positively undignified and idiotic. "My lady" was overwhelmed with apprehension. She would never see her favourite again; it would be

pecked to death by English birds jealous of its gaudy plumage. It would die of cold, hunger, thirst, or fright. How much better to have given it away, or that it had died a respectable death in a brass cage! We did all that human beings could do to tempt that little creature from the recesses of the comforting elm. We studded the paddock with stable lanterns, making the orchard into a kind of amateur Cremorne or Olympia, and in the centre, at the command of "My Lady," we placed the deserted cage containing a bribe of seed cake. As if a parrot, frightened to death up in a tree on a dark night, could see the cage or "take the cake." However, we did as we were bid. Tired of call-

ing up the tree, I secured a corner of advantage in an old stable loft, where I babbled parrot nonsense on a heap of chaff by the side of an uncomfortable chaff-cutter. But we had to leave the lost parrot until the champion climber of the village returned with the welcome daybreak. I slept fitfully and uneasily, on a study chair, for the house was full of woe and lamentation. Eventually the restless house was aroused by a cry of joy from the faithful Rhoda, who with the sentimental cook and the sympathetic lady's maid had taken the night in relays to call "Polly, Polly, Polly," in the paddock. And then she produced the bird, and a more dissipated wretch I never beheld after an ornithological night

on the spree. Its feathers were damp, its eyes were dim, its aggressive tone had departed. It was a wreck of a parrot. And after the joy of the recovery was consecrated in unholy libations, Rhoda, bursting with laughter, next produced the heroic boy.

If the rescued parrot was a sight, what, then, was the rescuing boy? Poor fellow, he had not been used to parrots. His right-hand thumb was bitten through, and on this point I could sympathise with him. His cheery face bore signs of a somewhat severe contest. You see, it is not so easy to climb down a tall elm tree with both hands whilst encumbered with an aggressive parrot. The attempt to soothe proved a ghastly

failure, so there was nothing for it but to smother the bird in a handkerchief and to bring it down in his teeth, as we used to do at school with the rooks' eggs in our caps—but, then, eggs don't bite and parrots do. I am convinced this village champion came down that tree quicker by far than the little natives do at Mount Lavinia, in Ceylon, when bribed to gather cocoa-nuts, and far swifter than the champion Arab in Egypt who is up one pyramid and down another literally before you can say "Jack Robinson," though why you should call on that particular gentleman to denote speed I have never been able to discover. If ever a boy deserved his reward he did. His predecessor who stood on

the burning deck was not in it with him. The incident somehow relieved the depression that St. Swithin had determined to create, but that holy man kept it up to the very last hour of his forty days. The warning of those dear, good-natured friends in London came back to me like a phantom message from the dead. "Oh, I know very well about your farm. It's all very well when the sun shines, but you'll be jolly sick of it before your time is up, and, take my word for it, you will be dying to be back in London, at the play and at the club!" These home truths are extremely irritating. They trouble one like a disordered conscience, and they struck me very forcibly on the

very last night of St. Swithin's reign of forty days, when we found ourselves—we, the idealists, the sentimentalists, the dreamers, the members of a league vowed to poetry and meditation—driving over to the cathedral town of Worcester to hear Albert Chevalier in his new entertainment in the great hall. At this point our scheme for an ideal retreat and the charm of solitude broke down entirely. Albert Chevalier did it! He "knocked 'em" in the Cathedral close of Worcester as satisfactorily as in the "Old Kent-road." I have never heard deans, deaconesses, canons, minor and major, canonesses, and precentors, choristers, and sacristans laugh so heartily as they did over the new

description of the "Costers' Court Ball" or shed so many tears over the "Dear Old Dutch." But we were punished for our temporary backsliding by driving home to our neglected farm in one of the most fearful thunderstorms that I have ever experienced out of the tropics.

I have seen rain in Ceylon that almost frightens the spectators with its terrific force, rain that hisses and roars as it descends, but never in old England such a waterspout of rain as attacked us full in the face on the pitch-dark Worcestershire common. I have seen lightning and heard thunder that may be said literally to deafen and blind the traveller walking alone over a deserted Alpine pass, but no thunder or lightning could

be compared to the Malvern thunderstorm when we faced the golf link at midnight. This was the tempest that cleared old St. Swithin away, and restored to us our battered August once more in plenty and peace. It was well, after all, to endure the "ruin of rain" for the sublime joy of reaction caused by fine weather. All nature rose enchanted to welcome the reappearing sun. The harvest-fields were once more filled with the song of the returned reapers; the earth seemed to heave a sigh of deliverance from its burden of water. The roses shook off their big tear-drops, and filled the moist air with an enchanting perfume. Lavender, and hay, and sweetbriar joined in the chorus of harmonious per-

fumes. The farmer who moaned that he only grew straw nowadays, never grain, took heart of grace, and on a certain morning, with St. Swithin dead, buried, and forgotten, our dear little world of the hopfields and the plum-trees "went very well then." The sweet joy of life had been returned to us, the deep delight of contemplation was restored. Hope was in every second of the long autumn days.

For more years than I care to recall I have been haunted with the dream of a "promised paradise," and it has been contained in two words—"Broadway, Worcestershire." After all, we are rather like the children who tuck the tit-bits away on their plates and "keep them to the last." We have

all, even in the contemplation of nature, our "bonne bouche." I think I know my England pretty well, but tempted sorely I have ever been to see the "paradise of painters," in the heart of the district of the pears and the plums—the one most exquisite village in all England, view it as you will, for its peace, its purity, and its architectural beauty, for its silent record of the dear Old England of long ago.

I had, somehow or other, kept Broadway until the last. I knew instinctively, dimly, and distantly that one day in the "good time coming, boys, wait a little longer" I should find myself in that sweet deserted village which has been the centre spot for countless years

in my imaginative reveries. It must have been more than half a century ago that I first heard of Broadway, and listened to its praises sung by an enthusiastic admirer of the "artistic dreamland." A friend of long ago, companion in the old Arundel Club days, a dreamer, a student, and bookworm, had become possessed of an ancient Tower on the top of the range of the Cotswolds under which the sweet retreat called Broadway nestled so lovingly. I was never so happy as in the days when, on our walks and rambles about London, he described me the Tower where he lived his strange, solitary, but lovely life, busying himself with the "cradleland of creeds," worry-

ing over the mysteries of Eastern religion and the birth of Faith, up in this lonely Tower in the most lovely district in all England, and with a prospect began this study of enchanting beauty.

Scores of times my old friend put the Tower at my disposal, and furnished me with maps and plans by which I might arrive there with the best convenience and speed. I seemed to know all about dear little Evesham—its broad High-street, its narrow approach to the bridge, and the silent river. I had travelled, always in imagination, through those orchards of the yellow Evesham plums, those *acres* upon acres of fruit-trees, greengages, damsons, and golden-drops, that weigh down

the branches on either side of the grass-grown highway. Even in imagination I had entered the village of Broadway, and had alighted at the Lygon Arms—that romantic, many-gabled Elizabethan hostelry, with its oak-panelled rooms and wide oak stair-case, where Cromwell slept and doubtless the Stuarts revelled. My mind contained scores of pictures of this wonderful bit of Old England that as yet I had never seen, but was kept as a picturesque joy for maturer years. So much, indeed, have I lived at Broadway, and inhabited my old friend's Tower, and been taken to the home of the Shakespeare antiquary and student who once possessed the place, that I have written

many a story with the scene laid at the Broadway Tower—the Tower I had never seen, but was still my destiny to visit.

Another picture comes before my mind. I am sitting one summer evening on the shores of the Lake of Lucerne with a new-found American friend of singular intelligence and very deep feeling. She is dreaming by my side of the England that is dear to both of us, the Old England that can never be forgotten even out here at the lakeside of, perhaps, the most beautiful spot in all Europe. When my mind goes back to scenes of loveliness, prominent among them must ever be the Lake of Lucerne. But still, she and I, the new-found friend and the old traveller, went

back in our thoughts to England, and to that district of it which, I believe, is better known to Americans than any corner of the old country. It was on this summer night, away in Switzerland, that this gifted and affectionate lady—alas! now in an agony of distress for the loss of the sweet little daughter who was our companion in so many a Swiss ramble—told me much more than I ever knew or even imagined about Broadway in Worcestershire—sacred to art always, ever sacred to the artists of America! When we go round the picture galleries in the summer-time, some of us who are familiar with both places say, “Ah! that is a bit of Newlyn;” and again, “Oh! but what a delicious peep

of Broadway ! " For as there is a Newlyn School, is there not also a Broadway School ? For who has been the presiding spirit of artistic Broadway these last ten years but Frank Millett, the gifted artist who has turned an old barn into a studio, who has made for himself one of the most tumble-down and picturesque dwelling-houses that I have ever seen, and has possessed himself of the architectural remnant of an old monastery once owned by the abbots of Pershore, which he is restoring with artistic love and care during the intervals of painting and running half over the world ? But the artistic centre of Broadway is Mrs. Millett's old English garden, which has inspired some of the most romantic and

realistic pictures of our time. Was it not in this old Broadway garden that Sargent, straight from nature, painted "Carnation," "Lily! Lily Rose!" Was it not here, amidst the scent of English blossoms, that Alma Tadema showed how roses could be combined with love? Here, surely, under the old yew tree, with the circular bench, Marcus Stone brought his separating and returning lovers. Here, within a stone's throw of this delightful home of art, in the merry springtime, are the apple-blossoms and hawthorns that Parsons revels in, and all over this enchanting country are the fields and the orchards and the old-world flowers that have inspired Edwin Abbey.

So at last fate willed it that I

should visit Broadway, in Worcestershire, adding this the best to all my rambles in the sunnyland where the hop festoons from pole to pole and the luxurious fruit on countless trees bears down the burdened branches to the ground. Evesham is in the very centre of the fruit-yielding garden of England, and in the matter of gardens I take it that Worcestershire would fairly challenge the supremacy of the famous Kent. I was lucky enough to arrive at Evesham when it was in the full glory of its weekly market-day. I love an old English town on a market-day; the carriers' carts, the simple homely bustle of the place, the goods exhibited, chickens, ducks, fruit, and flowers often in the roadway of the

market town, the homely greetings, the pleasant companionship, the treasured vestige of the old England that used to be. It "minds me," as the country folk say, of the days of my childhood, when it was my delight to sit dreaming in the bow window of an old Queen Anne house in the Buckinghamshire hamlet of Stony Stratford, now, alas, disfigured and desecrated by a steam tramway! How I can recall the covered tilted carts from Hanslope and Castle Thorpe, and all the adjacent villages, coming in to do their marketing and going out in the declining daylight with lamps hung in the tilt of the conveyances that were at one time private carriages and stage coaches for the

villagers! Some of this old-fashioned life still lingers at a place like Evesham, which has not lost the grace and the courtesy of the days that are gone.

Whilst the old grey horse was being harnessed to an old-fashioned gig, to take me across country, under the golden plum-trees of Evesham, I was lucky enough to renew my acquaintance with a "farmer's ordinary" on the market day of a small provincial centre. Your modern boys who go career-ing over the country and Continent without reverence, without pride in their ancestry, branding our nation with the hateful word "cad," by dint of bad manners, bad breeding, and unselfishness, would be surprised to find what

grace and courtesy are still preserved at a mid-day "farmer's ordinary" on a market-day in the Midlands. A popular member of the society of good honest fellows is elected a president of the homely dinner table, a companion well known is chosen as "vice," and I can assure you the office of president is no sinecure, when he has to sacrifice his own dinner for the pleasure of carving for a dozen hungry yeomen. But his reward is given in the grace and order of the table. No one sits down without bowing to Mr. President ; no one leaves the table without asking Mr. President's leave. If any angry feelings or trade disputes rankle in the constitution they are settled with the good old English

custom of "taking a glass of wine," a custom more honoured, in this instance, in the observance than in the breach. In fact, when I come to think of it, the reckless, unthoughtful, but ill-directed youth of to-day might learn a good deal from the "farmer's ordinary" in an old English town, profiting much by the wisdom of the old men there, and the reverential and withal modest attitude of the middle-aged. And a glorious drive it is between Evesham and Broadway on a late August afternoon. Already the quaint, blue-painted ladders were perched against the trees and the ripe fruit was falling into the baskets, and outside the farm gates they were packing the crates and ham-

pers that will be seen in London lumbering into Covent - garden Market by and by, exchanged from the sweet atmosphere of the peaceful country to the cries and curses of Endell-street and Drury-lane. I wish you could be transplanted, all of you, wherever you may be, rushing over the Continent or work-bound at home, to the front door of the grand old Elizabethan inn known as the Lygon Arms, at Broadway, the point of attraction in a village that has never lost the beauty and serenity of the England of our ancestors. The village green, the simple rustic shops, the primitive post-office, the ivy-clad and rose-embowered cottages, all of different shapes and patterns, the surrounding hills crowned

with the old Broadway Tower, and over all a sense of peace and restfulness that is indescribable.

I should like to stay for hours at the Lygon Arms, escorted over this pattern establishment, clean and polished as a new pin, by the sweetest and most courteous of hostesses, who takes a pride in every nook and corner of her new possession. I should like to dive into the old curiosity shop opposite and turn over the lumber of old oak wrenched from the sanctuaries of old churches and the panelled walls of mediæval cottages. But one house has for me a mysterious fascination. I want to see the old garden where all the best in modern English art was inspired. How Frederick Walker and Mason

would have loved this primitive Broadway village ! If the old almshouses at Bray gave the poetic glow to the " Harbour of Refuge," what wonders would have been accomplished by these masters of poetic, pictorial art in the ancient abbey of the Pershore friars and in Mrs. Millet's old-world garden. When you enter the garden you have lost count of time. You are not in this century. The grey, broken walls, to which the venerable fruit trees affectionately cling, the grass paths between the flower beds instead of gravel, the gorgeous assertiveness of the roses, the bold masses of brilliant carnations, the artistic divisions of colour : green, blue, yellow, and scarlet, all in their tones and gra-

dations, the scented hedges of sweet peas, the avenues of hollyhocks and lines of sunflowers, speak of an artistic cultivation beyond praise. And, dear me, how well now I can see the pictures that this lovely garden has inspired ! Here is a bit of Parsons, here of Abbey. Here Sargent sat to give to the world his wondrous flower pictures ; here, of course, is a typical bit of Marcus Stone ; from these boughs and branches came the roses by the hundred that Alma Tadema scattered on his marble pavements ; and here in this garden of old English gardens one might wander with endless delight.

In an orchard on one side the lads of the village are playing

cricket. This is their practice ground, and in the apple-dappled meadow they are hard at work at a local match, the ladies on the garden side of the "haha" watching intently and keeping the score. Who but an artist could be the master of this ideal summer-house? The art centre of Broadway has just returned from an absence of over three years or so from a journey of fatigue and adventure. To his fertile brain, good nature, and ready resource were due all that was best in the art, the pleasure, and the pomp of the Chicago Exhibition. His was the initiative spirit, and the labour was one of love. We parted last in Midway Pleasaunce of the World's Fair, and we meet—in,

ah! how different a spot—under the decorations that the simple villagers have created in his honour among the roses and the lilies that scent the English air, and in the garden that artists love to paint.

I have waited long for my visit to Broadway, and it has exceeded every artistic expectation. I felt somehow that fate would one day take me there, and it seems to me as if fate would bear me there again some day before it is all over and the pictures of the world are blotted out. And when will the return visit be paid? One day I believe I shall stand in that old Broadway garden once more, but it will be in the breath and spring of the year, when the hedges

are white with hawthorn and May,
when the first sun of the year
shines upon the waxen apple-
blossoms, and when all the
pictured path from Evesham to
Broadway is one procession of
virginal bloom. This, then, is
the artist's dreamland, this the
painter's paradise.

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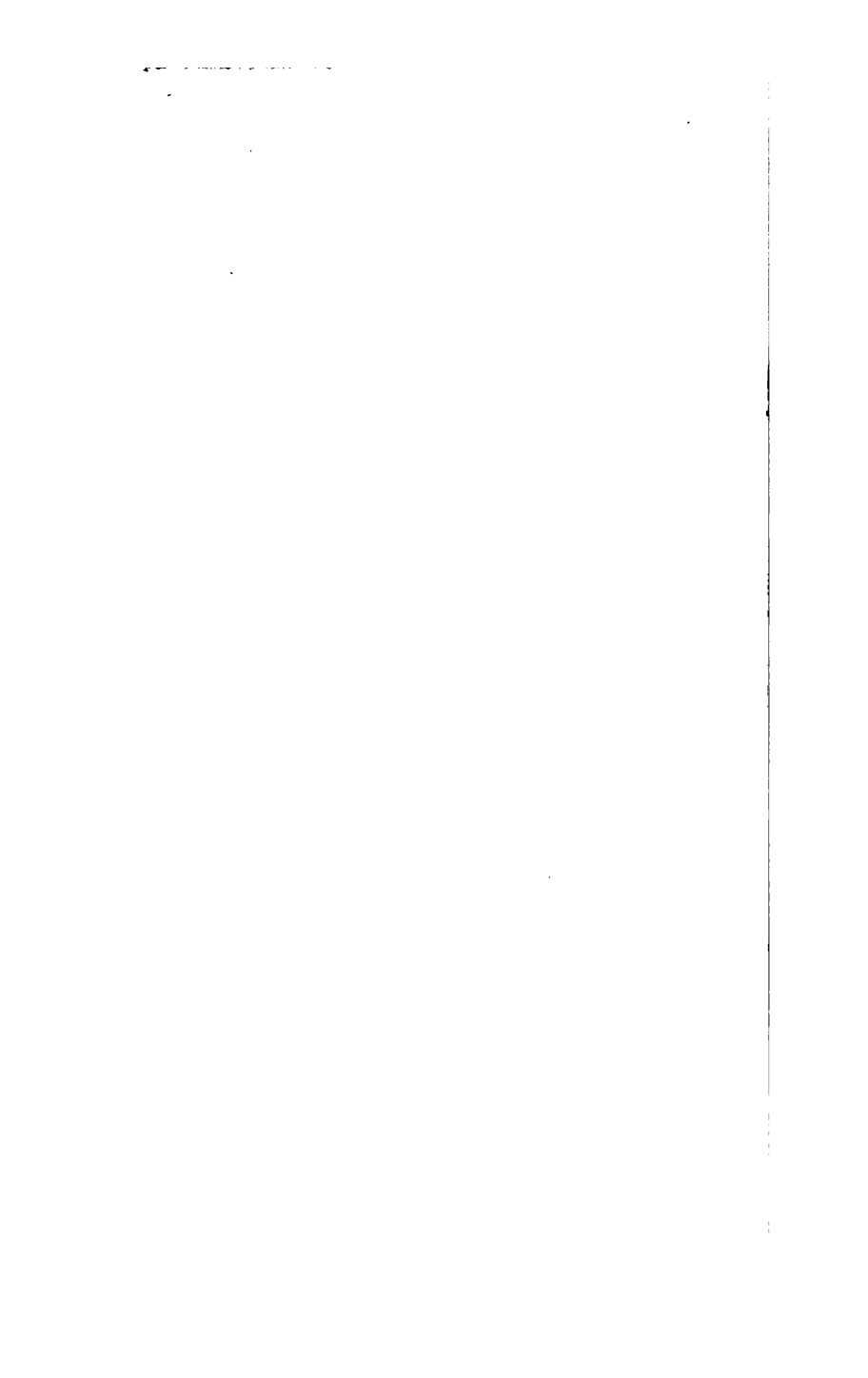
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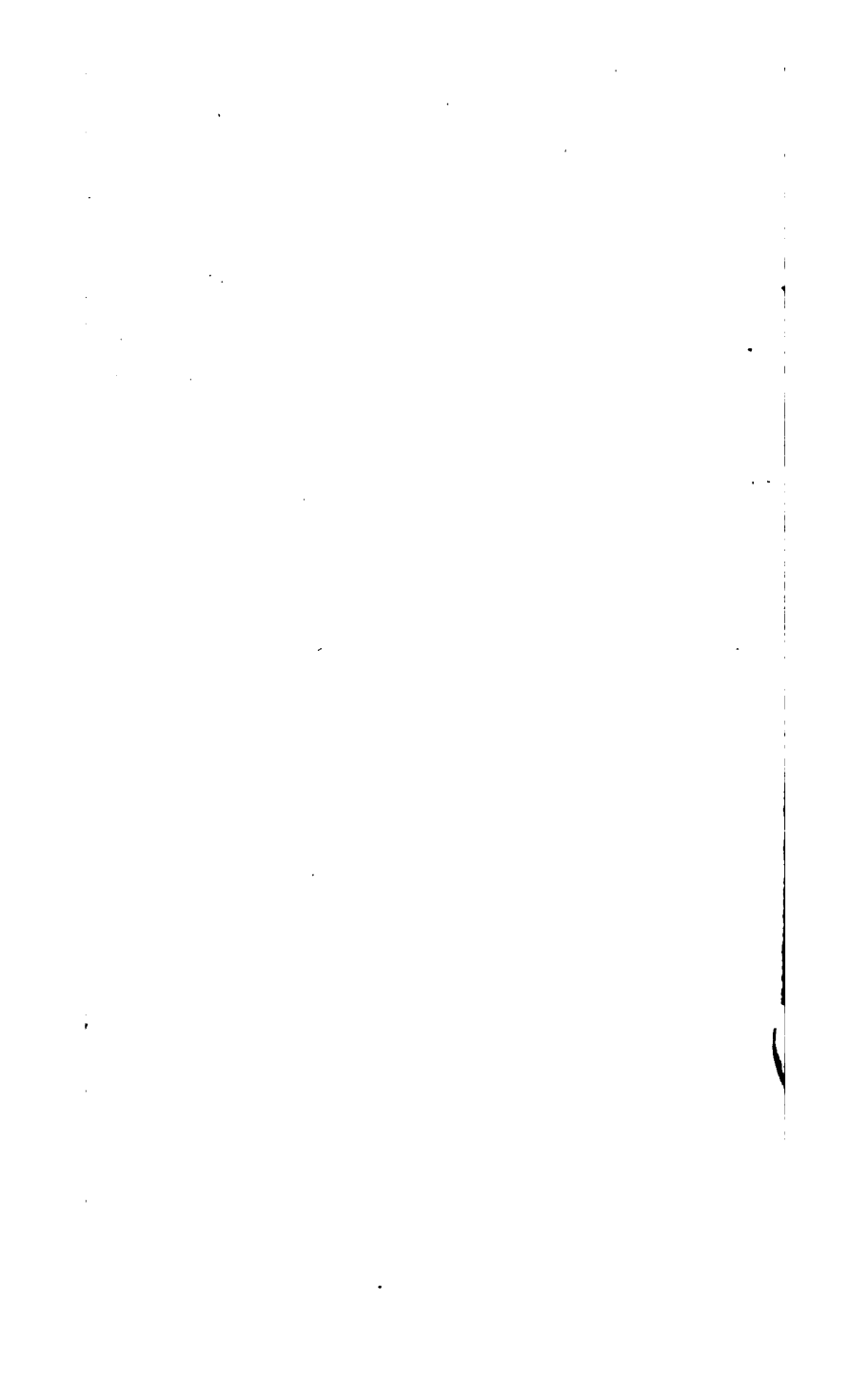
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